

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, ranking members Senator Hwang, Senator Somers, Representative Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Melissa Kane, and I am the Chairman of the Board of CT Against Gun Violence.

I am here today to testify in favor of SB 477 and HB 5397.

I got involved with CAGV because of the relationships and impact the organization has had with legislators for many, many years which has helped us pass legislation to reduce gun violence in CT and help ensure that it is a safe state in which to live.

There is no doubt that strong, sensible gun laws and adequate enforcement are essential. However, the type of legislation we have passed to date is clearly not sufficient, or appropriate in focus, to address the growing public health crisis of community gun violence.

Last year in Connecticut there were 118 gun murders, on average one almost every three days. It was the highest number of gun homicides in the state in 25 years.

The root causes of community gun violence must be addressed, conflict needs to be de-escalated and cycles of violence broken, in order to reduce it. And that can only be done by adequately and consistently funding the organizations on the ground in the affected communities - the cities - who are doing this essential work and have seen real results.

CAGV and our partners have been advocating for a vehicle to prevent community Gun Violence (to help coordinate and administer grants to these types of community and hospital based organizations) since the beginning of 2020. There was no legislation before the General Assembly, however, until Senator Marilyn Moore got involved, in response to horrific murders that took place between January and April 10 of 2021.

Senator Moore galvanized the legislature to finally address the public health crisis of community gun violence which led to the establishment of the Advisory Council on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention as part

of last year's Senate Bill 1. As you know, this bill also importantly declared racism a public health crisis.

Senator Moore opened our eyes to what needs to be done, and to what our response should be.

CT Against Gun Violence would very much like to see Senator Moore's bill, SB-477, move forward including some key language that is part of HB-5397.

We believe the most powerful bill would include five key components:

- Declaring that gun violence in Connecticut is a public health crisis to bring it the attention it needs.
- Housing the solution in the Department of Public Health where we believe it can have the greatest impact.
- Establishing an ongoing Advisory Council including the voices of those most impacted by community gun violence, and other community stakeholders, to ensure accountability.
- Including a robust data gathering and research capacity to drive evidence-informed grant-making
- And Appropriating ongoing funding commensurate to the magnitude of this crisis, starting with \$5 million in fiscal 2023 for operating expenses and grant-making.

I appreciate your taking my testimony into account and I thank you for your time.